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Questions about art materials?

Golden Paints, Inc., an art materials company in New Berlin, NY, owned partially by employees, offers an informative Resource page.

Look under Golden Paints, Inc.'s Resource page: www.goldenpaints.com/resourceindex.

In addition to information on Environment, Health and Safety, Technical Information, Custom Lab, and Product Support, the company's Just Paint newsletter serves as a technical resource for painters and educators. Readers may download the periodical in PDF format at justpaint.org.

ARTS EDUCATION

Montana Shakespeare in the Schools Delivering an artistic and educational experience

By Barbara (Bobbi) McKean

Starting in 2004, I have had the opportunity to work as educational consultant with the Montana Shakespeare in the Schools program. The statewide tour of Montana Shakespeare in the Schools is now in its 22nd year.

The program is a recipient of the Montana Arts Council's Artists in Schools and Communities grant and a Shakespeare for a New Generation grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. It reaches one middle or high school each day with an 80-minute performance of a Shakespearean play, a post-performance talk back, and related workshops for smaller groups held in students' classrooms.

This year, thanks to a sabbatical from my university, I spent three full weeks working with the actor-teachers in preparation for their current tour of "A Midsummer Night's Dream."

As a teaching artist and an associate professor of theatre education, working with MSIP exemplifies what I believe is critical to arts organizations in the schools: We consider each day as both an artistic *and* an educational day. From the time the van arrives, the company members are actor-teachers. The entire day is viewed as our opportunity to excite students and teachers about the world of theatre and Shakespeare.

It isn't about doing a performance *for* students and teachers. It is about creating opportunities for the company to interact *with* students and teachers. It's about playing and investigating together what actors do and what Shakespeare has to tell us about life, about theatre and about our current situations.

In "A Midsummer Night's Dream," the characters sit in the audience at times; the music is modern, sometimes silly and global; the text is clear; and the action is intense and non-stop. At the end of the play, when Bottom asks Theseus: "Would it please you to see epilogue?," often the audience will shout "Yes! Epilogue! Epilogue!" (Shakespeare, however, has Theseus decline).

As one of the actor-teachers put it "this

has been one of the greatest interactions ...

we've taken them from 'we have to watch this play' to 'we want to see MORE of this play!'"

During the post-performance talk back, the actor-teachers take questions, often discussing the play and the process of putting the per-

Workshops are key components

A key component of the day is the workshops. Each workshop is structured around the play and is designed to encourage students to actively engage with some aspect of Shakespeare's text.

The language workshop asks students to explore Shakespeare's metaphors in the text. As one actor-teacher wrote: "I was thrilled with the ideas they were coming up with for why the weather was happening and the characters they were creating."

In the production workshop, students create their own version of the play within the play. This year the actor-teachers are trying to involve the classroom teachers either as partner teachers or as participants. In one workshop, the teacher jumped in and the students really were enthusiastic about him being a part of the workshop.

New this year is a music workshop where students are asked to create sounds and Shakespeare's rhythms using their voices and bodies to see what happens. While

the workshop is exciting, many students find it difficult at first. "Making a collective challenge to the group about making strong vocal/percussive choices at the beginning, and establishing a safe space where no choice will be deemed 'stupid' I've found is the MOST important step in the workshop."

The stage-combat workshop is a regular option for students. "The nature of the work requires students to be fully in or just out altogether," notes an actor-teacher. "And the payoff is huge when it clicks. They take ownership of the moves and gain a respect for the discipline."

When each day is finished, the actor-teachers know they have given their all. But they also come away "knowing at least a tiny bit more about more than I did before" and that they are "paying it forward" by instilling in others their love for theatre and Shakespeare that will continue long after the van leaves the parking lot.

Bobbi McKean is an associate professor in the School of Theatre, Film and Television at the University of Arizona. She first saw Montana Shakespeare in the Parks perform in 1984. In 1985, she was an actor in the summer company. And every summer since then, she makes sure she spends at least some time under the big Montana skies!



Shakespeare in the Schools' production of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" featured Samuel Ashdown (Oberon), Kristin Hammargren (Titania) and Patrick Budde (Puck). (Photo by Ashely Stevick Photography)

formance together. One student noted that the play within the play reminded him of "Romeo and Juliet" (one of the plays MSIP performed this past summer). The actor-teachers were then able to talk about how Shakespeare wrote "A Midsummer Night's Dream" right after "Romeo and Juliet," and perhaps he wanted to poke some fun at his own tragedy.

Even lunch is an opportunity

At lunchtime, the actor-teachers spend time talking with the students. Some ask them about the life of an actor and where they learned their craft. This provides an opportunity to talk about college (all of our actor-teachers have college degrees). Students are genuinely comforted and thrilled the actor-teachers take time to listen to their stories.

A student sitting alone allowed a couple of actor-teachers to sit with him. "At first few words were exchanged but as soon as we started asking him questions he perked right up telling us all about things he was interested in and things he was learning about. We got a crash course in astronomy and the medieval chivalry code. You could tell this student is bright and just wanted someone to fan the flame and listen."

Jr. Duck Stamp Program melds art and science

"At a time when children are increasingly over-scheduled and overwhelmed with electronic gadgets and media, the Junior Duck Stamp Program helps them discover the value and joy in exploring their natural world."

— Sam Hamilton,
former USFWS Director

Do you want your kids to be happier, healthier and smarter? Research says connecting children to nature and art can help accomplish that.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is seeking entries for the Federal Junior Duck Stamp Program. This active, participatory art and science program is designed to teach wetlands habitat and waterfowl conservation to students in kindergarten through high school enrolled in private, public or home schools.

The curriculum (online at www.fws.gov/juniorduck/) ultimately guides and directs students, using scientific and wildlife observation principles, to draw or paint a waterfowl species in appropriate habitat, and then sub-



Carson Collinsworth of Whitefish took Best of Show in last year's contest, and his painting of a pair of harlequin ducks placed in the top 10 nationally.

mit their creation as an entry into the Junior Duck Stamp Art Contest.

About 27,000 students from across the country enter the contest annually. The program provides an opportunity for students to learn science and artistically express their knowledge of the beauty, diversity, and inter-

dependence of wildlife.

Montana students are invited to submit one entry apiece by the deadline of Sunday, March 15. The image must be of a live, native North American duck species, and it must measure 9"x12" in a horizontal layout.

Artwork can be drawn using ink, paint, pastel, crayon or pencil. Entries cannot be matted; drawn with a border; signed, initialed or lettered; computer-generated; photographs; or copies or tracings of published art. Entries placing first through honorable mention will be publicly acknowledged and feted at the Montana Junior Duck Stamp Award Ceremony, May 9 at Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge Outdoor Amphitheater in Stevensville.

Entries can be mailed or hand delivered to Lee Metcalf NWR, 4567 Wildfowl Lane, Stevensville, MT 59870. For more information call Bob Danley at 406-777-5552 ext. 203, email Bob_Danley@fws.gov or visit this Refuge webpage: www.fws.gov/refuge/lee_metcalf/for_educators/jds_adults.html.